



12-6-2018

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Recommended Citation

Lundebrek, Madisen; Peterson, McKenzie; Posthumus, Kristin; and Stennes, John, "Masculinity Threat and Attitudes Toward Gay Men: A Replication" (2018). *Essential Studies UNDERgraduate Showcase*. 18.
<https://commons.und.edu/es-showcase/18>

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Masculinity Threat and Attitudes Toward Gay Men: A Replication

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Introduction

- Glick and his colleagues specifically looked at the result of a masculinity threat and how it affected heterosexual men's attitudes towards feminine and masculine gay men. Their results showed that heterosexual men who received a masculinity threat have more negative affect towards the feminine gay man description than to the masculine gay man description. (1)
- A problem resulting from gender roles in society that is important to ponder in this study is toxic masculinity, which can be defined as a use of unhealthy and aggressive methods, such as violence, to maintain dominance and to be seen as more masculine within society's patriarchy (3).
- One result of toxic masculinity is the tendency for many heterosexual men to maintain misogynistic and homophobic attitudes as they are seen as a threat to their masculinity.
- Researchers at the University of Connecticut conducted a study on what men define as masculinity threats. 47.6% of the study participants said that participating in stereotypically feminine behaviors and having stereotypically feminine traits were considered threats (2).
- If femininity of any kind is seen in themselves, or if other people notice it, a man who is uncomfortable with this will then see this "threat," due to cognitive dissonance, and feel the need to make up for it by participating in more activities that would be considered masculine, and distancing themselves from all things that are seen as stereotypically feminine.

Participants

The experiment contained 73 participants, although 16 were excluded because of missing data.

- Each participant identified with being male.
- 60 stated that they are heterosexual, 11 are homosexual, 1 bisexual, and 1 chose not to indicate which sexual orientation they prefer.
- 57 of the participants were included in the data analyses.

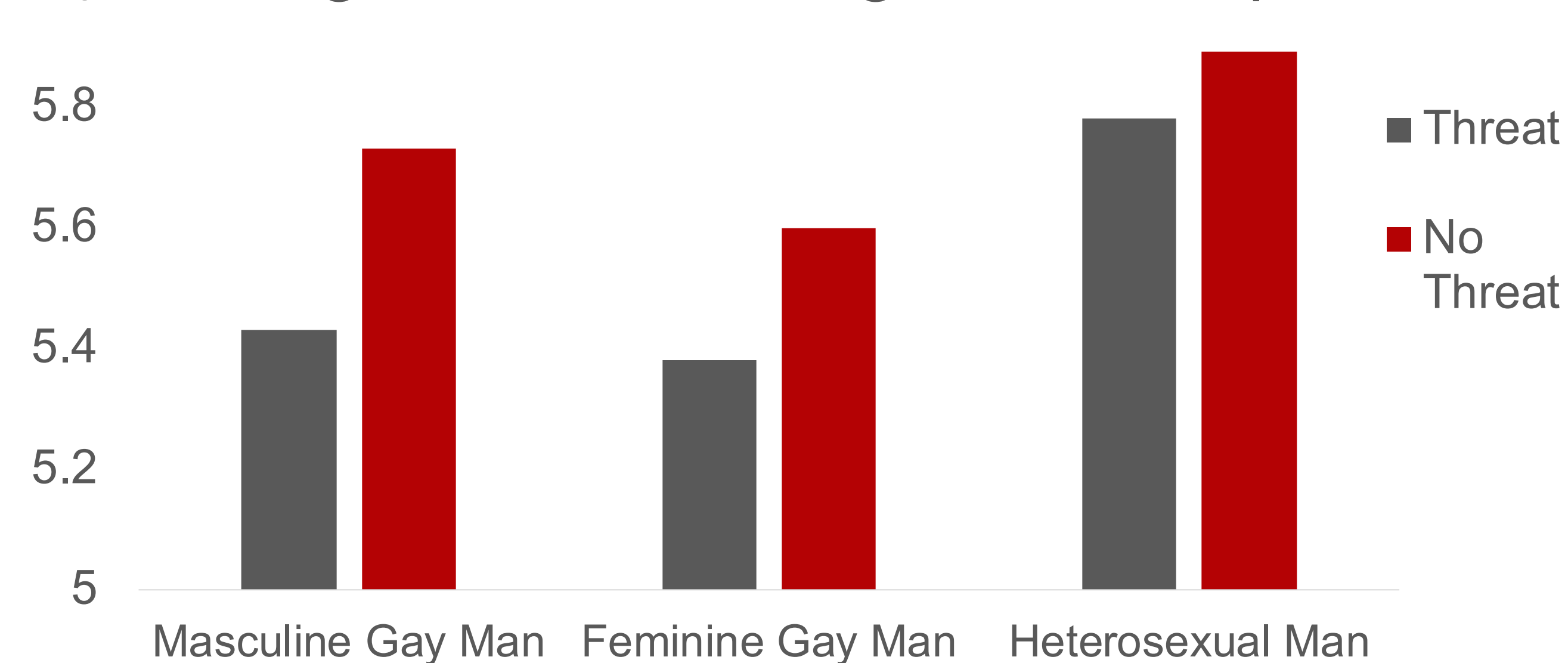
Methods

This was a 3x2 design which included two independent variables—masculinity threat (masculine or feminine personality results) and three dependent variables—the effeminate gay man, masculine gay man, and average heterosexual man descriptions. The participants used their own individual computers via Qualtrics to take an online survey.

- They were asked questions about their demographics.
- They completed a 1-5 (1 being does not describe me and 5 being describes me extremely well) Likert scale personality test based on the BEM
- They were then given one of two different results (masculine or feminine) at random.
- After being shown their results which had the potential to threaten their masculinity, they were shown 3 different dependent scenarios of men—effeminate gay man, masculine gay man, and average heterosexual man—which were followed by questions 20 about their attitudes toward each man.
- Data were analyzed using responses from five positive statements, and one negative statement that was reverse coded.

Results

6 Average Positive Rating Per Description



Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA with a between subjects factor. The study found no significant main effect for the type of feedback, masculine or feminine, that men received and there was no significant interaction effect. There was a significant main effect for the description of the male, $F(2, 110) = 7.42, p = .001, \eta^2 = .119$.

Conclusions

FINDINGS:

We found that men whose **masculinity had been threatened**, or those who received a "feminine" result after the BEM personality test, were **more likely to react negatively towards effeminate gay men (EGM)**, compared to men whose masculinity had been confirmed. This was **consistent to previous research** that concluded that the negative affect towards gay men was specific to EGM and not masculine gay men (Glick et al., 2007). If men are found to have stereotypically unwanted traits, then they can react defensively, which turns into negative feelings towards gay men, specifically gay men stereotyped as feminine.

CONSEQUENCES:

The **consequences** of this negative affect are extremely important when looking at **why hate crimes occur**. Our results showed greater discomfort and fear towards EGM in response to a masculinity threat. These emotions are factors in the stereotyping of effeminate gay men, which leads to the harassment of outgroups. This predicts aggressive actions taken against these people including, but not excluded to, hate crimes. Our results showed that gay men who are stereotyped as feminine are at greater risk of hostility after the harasser's masculinity has been threatened.

LIMITATIONS:

Originally we wanted to include a third independent variable, men who were or had been apart of Greek life, but demographics only inquired of students who lived in Greek housing, which excluded members of Greek life that live elsewhere. In future research on this topic, it would be better to ask if the participant is or has been involved in Greek life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The researchers would like to offer a special thank you to Dr. Heather Terrell for helping create and manage this study.

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